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ABSTRACT

Debate educators have been concerned about the disadvantages of tournament debating. While student debaters have learned critical thinking, research, writing, public speaking, and other skills, some former participants feel the experience left them too argumentative generally. Some scholars favor moving away from formal debating contests. A greater emphasis on basic research on argumentation would be more in keeping with other speech communication study. A shift to community and campus programs could generate greater public support for forensics. In addition, debates before lay audiences could teach students to adapt to situations and to learn to communicate more effectively. Audience-centered debates would also be more likely to trigger interest among other students. Furthermore, such debates can provide a forum for community issues. Educators need to do more research on audience-centered debate and to tell each other of work being done at the universities. If effort continues to be devoted exclusively to tournament debates, interest in debating may disappear. (SG)

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TAKING CEDA DEBATERS OUT OF THE NORMAL TOURNAMENT SETTING

Pamela Stepp

The purpose of CEDA according to its constitution is "to provide collegiate debaters with opportunities to debate alternative topics using the cross-examination or other non-traditional formats. The Association is to promote competitive practices which ensure the long-term growth and survival of intercollegiate debate activity by promoting a form of debate striking a balance among analysis, delivery and evidence." Presently, CEDA is putting too much emphasis on tournament debating and there are too few non-traditional formats. In order to ensure long-term growth, CEDA educators should consider taking their debaters out of the tournament setting. This paper (1) stresses the need for debate alternatives such as campus and community audience-centered debates (2) examines the advantages and disadvantages of such programs and (3) shares specific ideas for campus and community programs.

Nineteen years ago there was a panic in the debate community. Debate educators were complaining that debate had become too specialized and that all of the money, time, and energy was going into tournament debate. Some members of the debate community thought that putting all emphasis on tournament debating was straying too far away from the historical educational goals of society. According to Joseph W. Wenzel, "Debating societies developed in this country to fill a gap in the curriculum, to meet the need for better training in rhetoric, to help young men and women cope with the demands of real-life public speaking. In that environment students learned a full range of rhetorical skills -- analysis, research,

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organization, style, delivery, and adaptation to real public assemblies." Tournaments were started in this country to continue to teach students those skills.

Students have learned quick and critical thinking, research, organizational, critical listening, writing and public speaking skills. They have gained confidence in tournament debating. Yet, they rarely debate to real public assemblies. Debating most of the time for a trained debate coach has created specific problems. In a survey of participants in the National Debate Tournament 1947-1980, Ron Matlon and Lucy M. Keele found that "From 1947-68, 62 of the 416 NDT participants who responded thought their debate careers made them too argumentative generally. In the 1969-80 group, a much greater problem surfaced as 90 out of 287 said that they had learned to speak too rapidly. Other disadvantages on the increase are the use of unrealistic and spurious arguments, too much jargon and the over-reliance on authority and evidence."

Nine years has passed since the Matlon and Keele study. Since that time CEDA has become the largest intercollegiate debate activity. During 1988-89, 272 universities and colleges participated in CEDA in comparison to the 90-school membership for NDT. The purpose of CEDA was to strike a balance between analysis, communication, and evidence, to create a style that would be appropriate for audience-centered debate. To see how convention paper titles reflect perceived problems in the area of debate, let's review the debate-related offerings at the 1989 SCA Convention. "Applied Argumentation: Transferring Debate Training Into Service to the Community." "Preparing: Structuring, Organizing, and Evaluating Televised Municipal Debate." "Communicative Process of Debate: From

Audience to Argumentative Issues." "The Status of CEDA Debate in the U.S." "Debate Formats Available to Programs: A Variety of Styles for a Variety of Purposes." "Back To The Basics Revisited: Abusive Practices in Academic Debate." "Compelling Issues in Forensics: Directions and Decisions for the Future." "An Examination of the Educational Value of Competitive Forensics." "The First Sino-American Debates: A Discussion of International Academic Debate." "Taking CEDA Debaters Out of the Normal Tournament Setting." "Is There a Future for NDT Debates? Where Have All the Programs Gone."

Debate educators at the SCA convention once again seem to be concerned about the disadvantages that come from tournament debating. Seven programs suggest alternatives to tournament debate as solutions to the problems of tournament specialization which often limit student participation and interfere with educational goals.

Some of the benefits of taking debate out of the tournament setting include creating research opportunities, raising visibility which boosts financial and public support, emphasizing educational values, solving community problems, and increasing student interest. Research in forensics continues to be a problem. Most directors spend their time teaching, coaching, and judging at tournaments. Often research focuses on tournament-related topics of value to a narrow audience. Topics such as "Calling a Counter Warrant a Counter Warrant: An Immodest Proposal" and "Parameters for Criteria Debating" will draw limited audiences. Some research and scholarly work on such specific issues is valuable, but not all research can be so narrow. Joseph W. Wenzel in his article "Campus and Community Programs in Forensics: Needs and Opportunities" said, "In

recent years, however, scholars in speech-communication have been operating more in the manner of social behavioral scientists. Their emphasis is on describing the basic phenomena of communication, rather than on pedagogical application of results. I am convinced that scholars in argumentation must follow that same road. We must begin to do basic research in the phenomena of real-life argumentation. We must break out of the confinement imposed by taking the tournament debate as our chief model. An appropriate rationale and perspective for developing campus and community programs may help to serve that purpose."

A second benefit of community projects and campus debate programs is generating support for the program. In October, 1988, Cornell University Trustees and Council members invited the CEDA debate team to do a demonstration debate at their annual meeting on campus. Approximately seventy people attended the debate. Even though the debaters spoke very slowly (by tournament standards) many audience members wondered how the students had learned to speak so quickly. Speaking rate was the only negative comment. Many attendees were excited and stimulated by the debate. A typical comment was "I've been coming to these meetings for years and they always take us to the football games. It's about time that they showed us students using their brains." This audience-centered debate became the precursor of more audience-centered debates, resulting in alumni contributions to debate and job offers to debaters.

In December, 1988, the Secretary of State for New York State, Gail Shaffer, called ten university presidents in the state of New York. New York State was celebrating its bicentennial of the Electoral College. The Secretary wanted to hold a college student debate on the Electoral College

in the Senate chamber in January, 1989, to be broadcast on cable TV. Her purpose in having college students do the debate was to build a more favorable attitude toward college youth in America. The debate never happened. Few universities responded to the request and her research into college debate led her to believe that no one who is not a debate coach can understand college debate. According to Shaffer, the bicentennial committee decided that the debate would be too boring.

In a 1985 survey on audience-centered debate Judith Thorpe surveyed three hundred American Forensic Association members. Eighty schools responded to the survey. Of all the benefits listed the most frequently listed benefit was visibility. Thorpe said, "Besides the public relations aspect, the audience-centered debates were also perceived as a method to foster financial support and as a way to recruit new students to the program. From a total of 181 value responses 70 could be grouped under the heading of generating support." The twenty-three year old United States Military Academy tournament at West Point continues its tradition of holding an audience-centered debate for the final round. This past fall 42 teams competed for the honor of debating in the final round before Stanfield Turner, former director of the CIA, and four high ranking military officers. The debate coaches at USMA nervously spoke to the coaches and the finalists before the final round stressing the importance of communicating with the members of the judging panel. Influential panel members have been impressed with the student debaters during the past few years. This year the cadet who serves as president of the USMA team announced that members of the panel had recently made arrangements to reallocate some USMA football funds to the debate program.

Warren Bennis, Professor of Business Administration at the University of Southern California and former President of the University of Cincinnati warns that, "There is no institution more vulnerable to and hence more dependent on external forces than the American university." Bennis emphasizes that "universities are not self-supporting." Tuition pays only a small percentage of the costs of running a university; most of the rest comes from alumni or, in the case of public universities, the state. The falsely lulling self-image of the university that is remote and distant and somewhat "above" the outside society that nourishes and feeds it not only is outdated but if believed and acted on, will bring about the universities' destruction.

Debating for alumni, campus organizations, and in the community can help colleges and university presidents accomplish their mission. When a university president hears from alumni that they were impressed by the talent and intelligence of the debating team, or hears from the board of directors at a local nursing home that the debating team has visited a nursing home and done a demonstration, or reads in the local paper that the debating team has presented a debate for prisoners at the local maximum security prison, or listens to his daughter talk about the university debaters who are helping her teacher start a debate program, that university president will be more likely to do what he or she can do to keep such a useful organization funded. What debaters learn in tournament debating can be used to benefit their university and their community, but winning trophies alone does not necessarily sell the program.

Aside from the benefit of gaining support, campus and community programs educate students. Thorpe's study indicates that "respondents felt audience-centered debates provided opportunity for audience analysis, helped polish delivery skills, promoted critical thinking, and developed argumentation skills. Moreover, they suggested that such activities provided practice in the use of emotional appeals." When students debate before people other than debate experts, they are often criticized for rapid delivery, reliance on jargon, and resort to unrealistic arguments. If students debate in front of lay audiences, often they learn to adapt to the situation hence they begin to communicate more effectively. Increased applause and favorable comments after the debates are great confidence boosters (which reinforce communication lessons).

A fourth benefit from audience-centered debates on campus and in the community is that they increase student interest. Many intelligent students are repelled by tournament debating because it is difficult to understand tournament debate without debate training. Some superior students who pick up the rules of the game quickly don't see the relevance of the activity. On the other hand, campus and community programs often attract superior students who prefer performing for audiences to competing for trophies. Universities which offer alternative debate opportunities increase student participation.

Lastly, communities are served when schools offer audience-centered debates. Debate is a significant ingredient to functioning in a democratic society. Ten years ago students were learning how to debate in summer school at St. Lawrence University. As a final class project the students decided to do a campus debate. One of the students insisted that

they debate whether or not McDonalds should be allowed to build on Main Street in Canton, N.Y. The instructor reluctantly accepted the topic and suggested that the students make posters and advertise the event in the local newspaper. No one expected what took place on that summer evening. Two hundred Canton citizens including the mayor, two newspaper reporters, and two radio station reporters attended the event. Only ten university students attended. The debate was exciting. The students provided a lot of clash in the debate and the members of the audience continued debating, while the students moderated, for another hour and a half after the formal debate. The students learned more about debate that evening than in an entire summer session of class work. The reporters and the mayor thanked the university and the students for providing a forum for a community issue. This past summer University of Vermont coaches and debaters assisted Planned Parenthood and a Right to Life organization in Burlington in preparation for a community debate. The debate was very successful, thanks to the Vermont team.

There are two major reasons that schools do not participate in campus or community projects in debate. The major reason is that most coaches are overworked with teaching, coaching, research and tournament travel. Twenty-five CEDA members of the northeast region, surveyed in September, 1989, were asked what campus and community service events they had held during the past year. Thirteen schools responded. Seven of the schools had done at least one campus debate or community service related activity last year. Six schools said that they had done nothing because of time constraints. The second reason is program size. If a school has a small program, there are not enough debaters to do the increased amount of

research that is required for success in CEDA debate. This problem is also related to the time factor. Students are so burdened with research for tournaments there is no time for anything else. Although community service projects are time consuming the benefits are numerous. The final portion of this paper suggests projects to do and tells how to get them started.

It is not necessary for the overburdened coach to organize campus and community service programs. If your organization is a member of one of the honor societies such as Delta-Sigma Rho, the DSR president can be asked to organize community service projects. This activity is impressive on a law school or graduate school application. A student who is not a debater can be recruited to do the job. There always seem to be students who don't want to debate yet show interest in the team.

Some programs require that all team members take a turn doing community service projects. Active participation in this area can be used as a criterion for choosing national tournament participants. Recognition at end of the year awards ceremonies is another incentive to get students to organize and participate in community service projects.

Most university debate programs offer their services only by holding tournaments and institutes for high school students. Although these programs provide a valuable service, they are tournament oriented. There are many additional places to contact, places unconcerned with competitive debate. Important contacts include alumni organizations, local hospitals and nursing homes, and service organizations such as Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, American Association of University Women, Junior League, and League of Women Voters. Many prisons have college credit courses for inmates and

are very interested in debate. In the Northeast both Marist and Towson debaters have debated at prisons and assisted prisoners in learning debate. Scouting and 4-H organizations emphasize speech and debate and are eager to visit campuses to hear a debate team. Debaters can assist local government and universities to debate town-gown issues. William and Mary debaters hold a yearly town-gown debate. Advertising in local papers that college debaters are eager to assist or participate in local debates generally draws the attention of many interested groups.

Forensic programs need the support of their departments. A letter should be written to all teachers in the department announcing the debate resolution each semester and the availability of team members to do sample debates in classrooms. These classroom debates make excellent practice rounds and provide visibility on campus. If the debate team is not yet affiliated with a department, the Communication, History, or Government department is a good place to start.

University admissions offices should know about the debate team. Beyond knowing that a debate team exists, they should have heard the debate team debate so that they can describe the activity when they recruit at high schools. Admissions recruiters are eager to learn about the debate team since high school debaters are generally bright students. If possible, present an audience-centered debate for admissions and athletic recruiters. If these people are familiar and impressed with the activity, they will be able to encourage and answer the questions of high school students.

Do not overlook debating internationally. Two former Cornell University debaters consider their international debate experiences as the

highlight of their debating careers. Attorney Floyd Abrahms, class of 1951, states, "I will never forget when we debated Oxford. It was the best experience of my debating career even though they overwhelmingly beat us with their wit and humor." Dr. Henry Heimlich, class of 1941, remembers, "As I look back on my debate experience, it was when we debated the British on campus that was the most thrilling." When Brenda Logue, Director of Forensics, Towson State University, surveyed her debate alumni on the benefits of debate, the majority said what they remembered the most was when the British came to debate. SCA sponsors a seventy year old international debate exchange. According to James Chesebro, present coordinator of the program, representatives of sixty-four colleges and universities have gone abroad to debate. One hundred twenty American debaters have participated in the program abroad. Two hundred seventy debaters have come to the United States from other countries. Half a million people have listened to the debates. When international student debates are scheduled for the U.S. most of the times are filled. Chesebro says that more American universities could participate. Teams from abroad sometimes come at their own expense. It is easier to deal with SCA since they take care of all medical insurance costs. The SCA finds the program to be very costly. They have lost money on the debates the last eighteen years even though they ask host schools to put $400 toward air travel for the teams. SCA is working on setting up an endowment to continue the debates. They see the exchanges as very educational.

Some universities have sent their debaters to other countries unilaterally. At this convention, Don Brownlee, Director of Forensics, University of California, Northridge, will discuss how debaters from

several California Universities got to China. Gary Horn, Director of Forensics, Ferris State University, will discuss his trip with his students to Belize in Central America. Students who have participated in these trips look at the experience as one of the most important things that happened to them while university debaters. We need to continue these exchanges in the future.

In order to advance the educational goals of debate and to keep large numbers of students involved we must do more than provide competition through tournaments. Tournaments do provide learning experiences and practice grounds. But it is also necessary to take our students out of the tournament setting into the real world. When we watch and listen to our students debate in real world settings we will be able to see what they have learned from their debate education. Little is published in our journals concerning what our debate students are doing on campus or in their communities. The panels at this convention indicate a need for audience-centered debate and show that some projects have been initiated. We need to do more research on this subject and to tell each other what we are doing at our universities. We should ask our students right now what they will remember most about their university debate experience. If we continue to put all of our time and energy into tournament debating, there may be a panel at SCA in a few years that is titled "Where Have All the CEDA Debate Programs Gone?"

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